

Grammar



A Parents' Guide

A guide to the new national curriculum's grammatical terms for those of us who weren't taught grammar at school.



ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

YEAR 6

An action within a clause can be expressed in one of two ways: active or passive voice.

The active voice has the subject as the active part

The mouse ate the cheese.

In this example, the mouse is doing something. It is eating the cheese; the mouse is active. The passive voice has the subject acted upon.

The cheese was eaten by the mouse.

In this example, the cheese is the subject, but it is passive. The mouse is still doing the eating and takes attention away from the subject.



SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

YEAR 6

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings.

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings.

FOR EXAMPLE

big and large
talk and speak
small and tiny

FOR EXAMPLE

fat and thin
helpful and unhelpful
decent and indecent

Synonyms aren't always interchangeable, so make sure you understand a word's meaning.

We can often create antonyms by adding prefixes like 'un' and 'in'.



SUBJECT VS. OBJECT

YEAR 6

The subject of a sentence will normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.



We would normally expect a subject to go before a verb.

An object will also normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.



We would normally expect an object to go after a verb.

REMEMBER!

The subject is what the sentence is about. It can affect the form of the verb.



ELLIPSIS

YEAR 6

An ellipsis is used to show an omission of expected words.

Clever writers can use an ellipsis to create drama and tension. In this instance, we would use three dots.

FOR EXAMPLE

The man stopped...

In this example, the omission of any text after the statement makes us wonder why the man has stopped. However, we don't always need the dots.

John watched his mother and went over to help.

FOR EXAMPLE

The omission of the word 'he' before 'went' is an ellipsis, but doesn't require three dots.



SEMI-COLONS YEAR 6

A semi-colon can be used to join closely connected main clauses.

FOR EXAMPLE

I really enjoy playing football; it's the best game in the world.

The clauses at either side of the semi-colon could be short sentences. Semi-colons can therefore sometimes replace conjunctions.

We can also use semi-colons in lists where commas are already in use.

FOR EXAMPLE

The teams playing came from Harrogate, North Yorkshire; Hastings, East Sussex and Ipswich, East Anglia.



COLONS

YEAR 6

A colon will introduce a list or an explanation.

It can be used in place of the following words/
phrases:

Such as...

Include/including...

They are...

A colon shouldn't be used if it's not required.

FOR EXAMPLE

The ingredients include: jam, flour and soap. 

The example is incorrect. We should use
'include' OR the colon.

REMEMBER!

Colons are a rare
punctuation mark.



BULLET POINTS

YEAR 6

Bullet points are used to highlight important pieces of information.



They will typically follow a colon.

We should use full stops and capital letters if the points form full sentences.

REMEMBER!

These suggestions are guidelines and not rules, but be consistent.



HYPHENS

YEAR 6

Hyphens can be used in compound words, to join prefixes to other words and to show word breaks.

Hyphens can show that words have a combined meaning. This can help us to avoid ambiguity.

FOR EXAMPLE

A first-half goal
(a goal scored in the first half)

VS.

A first half goal
(the first time that part of a goal has been scored)

REMEMBER!

Don't confuse
hyphens with dashes.



SUBJUNCTIVE

YEAR 6

English has three main forms or moods.

The
indicative

Asks
questions
or states
facts

The
imperative

Gives
commands
or
requests

The
subjunctive

Refers
to
possibilities

The subjunctive will use the root or stem of the verb and is more noticeable when using the third person singular.

FOR EXAMPLE

I suggest that she accept our terms.

Note that the verb form would usually be 'accepts'.

REMEMBER!

The subjunctive can sound very formal.

